

Research Group on Collaborative Spaces (RGCS)

5th RGCS Symposium

Monday, 14th and Tuesday, 15th December 2020
organized by Milan Chapter, Italy

Collaborative practices, workspaces and communities in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis

1. Topic of the 5th RGCS Symposium #RGCS2020

In today's economy, most value creation happens when workers think, talk, and brainstorm (Colpaert, et. al., 2014), namely when they collaborate. This way, they create and share knowledge. In their various manifestations, from coworking spaces to open communities, forms of commons-based peer production and collaboration networks, collaborative practices have become widespread in knowledge-intensive industries, most commonly across urban environments (e.g., Palvalin and Vuolle, 2016), and strongly depend on face-to-face interactions to unleash their full potential.

The Covid-19 pandemic, however, has bluntly interrupted this virtuous cycle. In the unprecedented period of health crisis experienced on a worldly scale in the first half of 2020, the ways in which collaboration happens changed abruptly. Contextually, the most extensive remote-work (WFH) experiment has occurred (Konya, 2020; Memoori, 2020), which offers several opportunities for investigating new forms of collaborative practices, workspaces and communities in the absence of face to face interaction. Arguably, collaborative and shared spaces are those which suffered the most from the Covid-19 downturn, first because of the shutdown, then - when reopened - since they were forced to radically redesign the practices of everyday interaction taking place within the space. Epistemic communities, experimental innovation, coworking spaces, corporate offices, and hubs are only some of the collaborative contexts where knowledge sharing is supposed to happen (Ciaramella, Rossi-Lamastra, Rovelli and Tagliaro, 2018). While collaborative spaces have experienced in recent years a multiplication of the objectives, subjects and structures involved, leading to a reinterpretation and progressive differentiation of the practices that take place within them (Ivaldi et al., 2019), today the many independent workers, freelancers to entrepreneurs, employees and founders of startups who inhabit them are called to reinvent them, to cope in the "new normal" of the pandemic society. As a consequence, new collaborative spaces' arrangements and related innovative collaborative practices have emerged. These deserve attention to understand the extent to which they are only temporary or can become the "future spaces / ways of collaborating".

In the RGCS 2020 online symposium we would like to focus on the exploration, analysis and critique of those original collaborative practices that were born or evolved due to Covid-19. We

intend here collaborative practices broadly, as the heterogeneous set of shared physical and immaterial workspaces, communities, or otherwise commons-based initiatives that strive for either cognitive or manual collaboration.

We are interested in contributions that challenge the concept of face-to-face collaborative practices, and explore examples of collaboration that might expand our understanding of the relationship between physical and digital collaborative experiences.

We welcome both theoretical and empirical studies. For inspiration, we provide examples of key topics below.

- The “phygital” phenomenon in the collaborative experience;
- New collaborative practices in contexts where population density is lower;
- Coworking spaces, maker spaces, etc. and their reaction to Covid-19;
- Community support in mitigating the economic and social impacts of Covid-19;
- Urban VS suburban collaborative practices in response to the pandemic;
- Hybridization of functions and users within and beyond the city during a pandemic;
- Collaborative practices, solidarity, and forms of organizing;
- Stories of inclusion through new collaborative practices (e.g. women, neurodiverse people, disabled people, elderly, etc.);
- Comparative historical/geographical perspectives on collaborative practices during pandemics;
- Collaborative and alternative work arrangements taken in the Coronavirus crisis;
- New work practices & future of collaboration.

Papers on other topics are also welcome as long as they explicitly contribute to research on old or new ways of working and collaborative spaces / communities / movements.

2. RGCS in a nutshell

RGCS is both an alternative learned society, a think tank and an immaterial maker space about and for new work practices. Collaborative communities and collaborative movements (coworkers, makers, hackers, DIY) are both a research object and a lever to transform work practices.

Since late 2016, the network co-produces a new research method OWEE ([Open Walked Event-Based Experimentations](#)) aiming at transforming jointly academic and entrepreneurial work practices. This method aims at becoming a commons for academics and entrepreneurs involved in it (e.g. with a sharing of the symbolic capital of impact and citations).

For more details about the Research Group on Collaborative Spaces (RGCS): [@collspaces](#) or <http://rgcs-owee.org>

3. Submission process and organization

30 September: deadline submission short abstract (400 words) via email rgcs.milan@gmail.com

2 October: communication of acceptance

30 October: extended abstract (2.500-3.000 words)

20 November: communication of acceptance

30 November: video-presentations upload (7-8 minutes)

The event will be held virtually and will **include keynotes, parallel panels, roundtables, virtual tours and ... video-presentations!**

With the last communication of acceptance, you will be asked to produce a short video-pitch of your extended abstract, which will be commented on in the panels.

The participation at the symposium for both presenters and auditors will be subjected to registration, even if totally **free of charge**.

Mandatory Registration **by December 6** [here](#).

For submissions and questions: rgcs.milan@gmail.com

Local organizing committee

Alessandro Gandini (Università degli Studi di Milano), Silvia Ivaldi (Università di Bergamo), Ilaria Mariotti (Politecnico di Milano), Alessandra Migliore (Politecnico di Milano), Federica Rossi (Politecnico di Milano), Giuseppe Scaratti (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Chiara Tagliaro (Politecnico di Milano).

Scientific board (tentative)

Rianne Appel-Meulenbroek (Eindhoven University of Technology), Andrea Ciaramella (Politecnico di Milano), Alberto Cossu (University of Leicester), Emmanuel Costa (Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina), Vitalija Danivska (Aalto University), Luisa Errichiello (CNR-Istituto di Studi sul Mediterraneo), Alessandro Gandini (Università degli Studi di Milano), Alessandro Gerosa (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Ying Hua (Cornell University), Silvia Ivaldi (Università di Bergamo), Ilaria Mariotti (Politecnico di Milano), Alessandra Migliore (Politecnico di Milano), Tommasina Pianese (CNR-Istituto di Studi sul Mediterraneo), Sofie Pelsmakers (Tampere University of Technology), Andrea Resca (LUISS Guido Carli), Federica Rossi (Politecnico di Milano), Cristina Rossi-Lamastra (Politecnico di Milano), Giuseppe Scaratti (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Chiara Tagliaro (Politecnico di Milano), Paula Ungureanu (Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia), Yaoyi Zhou (Cornell University).

4. References

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Partners of the 5th RGCS symposium

COST Action CA18214: The COST project **'The geography of New Working Spaces and the impact on the periphery'** involves 90 research partners from 30 countries - from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2023. The aims of the project are i) sharing the scientific outcomes on new working spaces such as Coworking (CS) and Maker Spaces (MS) (definitions, typologies and geographical distributions) ii) comparing the best practices and direct and indirect impacts with a particular focus on the periphery iii) sharing the policy tools across the countries.

European Union Website: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA18214>

Project Website: www.new-working-spaces.eu

FB page <https://www.facebook.com/COSTActionCA18214NeW.Sp>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/newworkingspace>

FB group (Italy-covid 19) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/886380135100739>



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